

## NOTE TO READERS

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The Healthy Buildings, Healthy People Draft Final Report serves two purposes. First, it is a call to action for all of us to work together to influence the indoor environment. As such, the report serves as the basis for discussion and education among professionals in public policy, health, building sciences, product manufacturing and environmental research. Second, it is a blueprint for channeling available resources. Already, EPA has undertaken program and budget initiatives focused on childhood asthma, increasing demand for cleaner indoor products for use in schools, and creating standards of care for existing buildings. Only sustained enterprise fixed upon these goals by those in the public and private sectors will let us fulfill the Healthy Buildings, Healthy People (HBHP) vision in the decades ahead.

Obviously, this draft is a work-in-progress. Once again, it is your turn as an expert, industry representative, futurist, policy maker or concerned citizen to reflect on the broad structure of the approach the HBHP study has taken and provide EPA with your comments. We especially want your answers to four broad questions:

- Do the vision and goals capture the themes that are essential for improved indoor environments?
- Are there opportunities for improvement which remain unaddressed in the potential actions?
- Which potential actions are most critical for EPA to undertake, which can others implement, and which can you engage in?
- Are there scientific, technological, health, economic, or administrative issues that have yet to be addressed?

Your reflections on these points are most welcome and will be addressed in the final publication of the HBHP Report. Please share your written or oral comments with the HBHP staff by May 31, 2000. Contact information is provided in the box to the right.

### COMMENTS

Please send comments on this report by May 31, 2000 to:

Pauline Johnston  
OAR  
U.S. EPA (6609J)  
1200 Pennsylvania  
Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460  
phone: 202 564-9425  
fax: 202 565-2039  
e-mail:  
johnston.pauline@epa.gov

Or, to:  
Dan Fort, OPPTS  
U.S. EPA (7406)  
1200 Pennsylvania  
Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460  
phone: 202 260-1694  
fax: 202 260-0816  
e-mail:  
fort.daniel@epa.gov

This document is available on the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/iaq>

The importance of the indoor environment to human health has been highlighted in numerous environmental risk reports, including the 1997 report of the Presidential and Congressional Commission on Risk Assessment and Risk Management. We spend as much as 90% of our time indoors, where pollutant levels are often higher than those outside. Indoor pollution is estimated to cause thousands of cancer deaths and hundreds of thousands of respiratory health problems each year. In addition, hundreds of thousands of children have experienced elevated blood lead levels resulting from their exposure to indoor pollutants.

The Office of Air and Radiation (OAR) and the Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances (OPPTS) led a cross-Agency effort to define a strategic vision and potential actions for improving the quality of our indoor environment. As part of this effort, we sought the advice of many outside experts and visionaries. During this collaborative process, we learned a great deal from our stakeholders. For example, we need to further understand indoor sources of pollutants and their health effects, integrate building design and maintenance, encourage federal buildings to be “model” indoor environments, support new product technologies, and educate the public. Also, we need to work closely with other federal agencies; state, local and tribal governments; health and community organizations; and industry and other private groups to improve the nation’s health.

Based on stakeholder and cross-Agency input, we have developed the vision, goals, guiding principles, and potential actions to improve human health indoors outlined in this document. Chapter 1 focuses on why human health indoors deserves the scrutiny, concern, and action of policymakers. These reasons are primarily health-related. Health risks associated with indoor environments include asthma, cancer, reproductive and developmental effects, and others. Significant gaps still exist in the current state of knowledge about indoor environmental risks and exposures. We also believe that a particular emphasis must be placed on children’s health.

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Chapter 2 presents a draft vision statement and outlines goals, broad strategies, and guiding principles to achieve success in every sector of our society over the next 25 to 50 years. In short, our objective is to realize major human health gains over the next fifty years by upgrading indoor environments. Five goals or strategies have been set to accomplish this objective: (1) achieve major health gains and improve professional education; (2) foster a revolution in the design of new and renovated buildings; (3) stimulate nationwide action to enhance health in existing structures; (4) create and use innovative products, materials, and technologies; and (5) promote health-conscious individual behavior and consumer awareness. In addition to providing information on actions and strategies that can be taken to protect people indoors, EPA's vision acknowledges the important role played by individuals in protecting their own health and the health of those around them. Chapter 3 lays out potential actions that EPA or others may pursue.

Appendix A provides an overview of current indoor environmental program priorities in various offices within EPA. Appendix B examines the roles of the Agency's partners in indoor environmental protection, including federal, state, local, and tribal governmental organizations, as well as stakeholders in the private sector.

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